



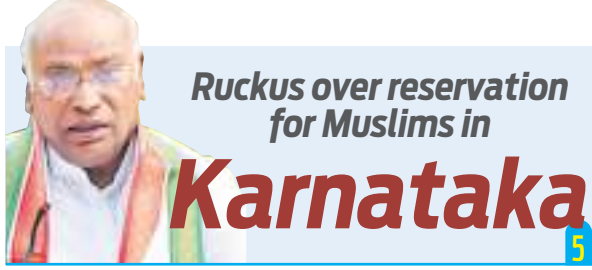
The Pioneer

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Ruckus over reservation for Muslims in Karnataka



INDIA AIMS TO BECOME ALTERNATIVE TO GLOBAL SHIP-BUILDING INDUSTRY



Suhas confident about O Bhamu Ayyo Rama after SKEPTICISM

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

Gajwel leaders complained that their MLA Kalvakuntla Chandrasekhar Rao was not present in the Assembly and as a result, public issues connected to the constituency were not discussed in the Assembly. I have a special affection for Gajwel as it reminded me of the 'Dalit-Tribal Dandora' that was held on the land of Gajwel. The people's government stands by the constituency in development matters

- Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister

P2

DON'T MISS...

Woman jumps off train to thwart assault

A 23-year-old woman working for a food delivery agency sustained severe head injuries after jumping off a moving MMTS train to escape an alleged sexual assault attempt on Saturday night. The incident took place shortly after the train departed from Alwal station while she was travelling from Secunderabad to Medchal, the police said. The woman was immediately rushed to the hospital, where she is undergoing treatment. Doctors have confirmed that she is out of danger. Secunderabad Government Railway Police (GRP) have ...

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UCC will benefit Muslim women

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Monday said the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) will give equal rights to every citizen of the state regardless of their religion or caste and end the oppression of Muslim women. Addressing the gathering at a function held at Gandhi Park here to felicitate him on the completion of three years of his second term as chief minister, Dhami said his government is living up to the expectations of the people of Devbhoomi, who have given their mandate to the...

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Investors' wealth swells by Rs 27.10L cr

Markets investors became richer by Rs 27.10 lakh crore as the BSE benchmark Sensex continued to rally for the sixth trading day, surging nearly 6 per cent during this period. On Monday, the 30-share BSE bellwether gauge jumped 1,078.87 points or 1.40 per cent to settle at an over six-week high of 77,984.38. During the day, the benchmark zoomed 1,201.72 points or 1.56 per cent to 78,107.23. The BSE benchmark gauge jumped 4,155.47 points or 5.62 per cent in six trading days. Tracking the optimism...

-PAGE: 8

I have to adapt and stay relevant: Dhoni

Rejecting speculation that he is the back-room decision-maker in Chennai Super Kings despite handing over captaincy to Ruturaj Gaikwad, the talismanic Mahendra Singh Dhoni said he is instead focussed on reinventing himself and his strokes to "stay relevant" in the IPL. Speaking to "JioStar" after CSK's four-wicket win over Mumbai Indians in their lung-opener on Sunday night here, Dhoni spoke about the team dynamics under Gaikwad, his own form and also the regional commentary being ...

-SPORTS

SC recommends Verma's transfer to Allahabad HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/PRAVAGRAJ

After two meetings, the Supreme Court Collegium on Monday recommended the repatriation of Delhi High Court judge Justice Yashwant Varma, who is facing a probe into the alleged discovery of huge stash of cash from his official residence in Delhi after a fire incident, to his parent Allahabad High Court.

Hours after the transfer recommendation to the

HC lawyers to go on strike

Centre was made public in a resolution uploaded on the website of the top court, the

president of the Allahabad High Court Bar Association (AHCBA) Anil Tiwari said the high court lawyers will go on an indefinite strike from Tuesday in protest against this move. Justice Varma's proposed transfer could come into effect after the Centre accepts the recommendation, which came on a day when the Delhi High Court in a notice withdrew judicial work from Justice Varma "with immediate effect".

"The Supreme Court Collegium in its meetings held on March 20 and 24,

2025 has recommended the repatriation of Justice Yashwant Varma, Judge, High Court of Delhi, to the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad," said the resolution adopted by the top court.

The AHCBA last week voiced its opposition to any such move, saying the high court is not a "trash bin". In a series of resolutions, it also urged the CJI to allow investigating agencies to take action against Justice Varma besides calling for impeachment proceedings against the judge. The lawyers also abstained from judicial work after the lunch break.

2



Justice Varma cash discovery row

New TG High Court complex tender floated, project to cost Rs 1,443 cr

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Government of Telangana has formally launched the process for constructing a new High Court complex at Rajendranagar, with an estimated outlay of Rs 1,443.73 crore.

The Roads and Buildings Department has floated a tender inviting bids from special-class civil contractors registered with the Telangana Government. The tender document was issued by Superintending Engineer I. Narasinga Rao of the R&B Headquarters Circle, Hyderabad.

Continued on Page 2

'Per capita water availability in AP 4 times more than in TG'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II resuming the hearing of final arguments in New Delhi, Telangana has mounted a strong case for a fresh, equitable distribution of Krishna waters, rejecting the continued use of administrative arrangements made by the united Andhra Pradesh.

The state's legal team led by Senior Counsel CS Vaidyanathan argued that Telangana has been his-

torically short-changed in both per capita water availability and basin-



based allocations. Presenting data-backed arguments, Telangana pointed out that

the existing internal arrangement - through which Andhra Pradesh retains an overwhelming share - was not only arbitrary but severely tilted against TG.

While Andhra Pradesh enjoys a per capita water availability of 1,892 cubic meters per annum in the Krishna basin, Telangana is left with a mere 422 cubic meters which is well below the national average of 733 cubic meters. Even in United AP, the average was 828 cubic meters, according to KWDTI allocations.

Continued on Page 2

Cabinet berth likely for Vijayashanthi

Names of Raj Gopal Reddy, Sudharshan, Premsagar Rao, Vakiti Srihari and Vivek under consideration

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, TGPC Chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud, and Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy were busy in New Delhi holding talks with AICC President Mallikarjuna Kharge, Rahul Gandhi, AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal and AICC Telangana in-charge Meenakshi Natarajan on Monday for the leftover six cabinet berths.

Meanwhile, the Congress suspended MLC Theenmar Mallanna who tweeted that 'Komatireddy Raj Gopal Reddy, Sudharshan Reddy, K. Premsagar Rao, Vijayashanthi, Vakiti Srihari and Gaddam Vivek got Minister posts.'

He also said in his tweet that Konda Surekha and Juppally Krishna Rao are going to lose their minister

CM, Dy CM, TPCC chief busy in New Delhi

posts along with two more Ministers who also would lose their Minister posts.

He also tweeted saying K. Madiga MLA is going to get the Deputy Speaker post and Munnurukapu is going to get Chief Whip position.

Meanwhile TPCC Chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud said that

AICC Chief Mallikarjuna Kharge and Rahul Gandhi enquired about the development and welfare schemes being implemented in the state. Rahul asked about health and education schemes too, he said.

Addressing the media after meeting with Rahul Gandhi and Kharge on Monday night, Mahesh said that there was a discussion on how many SC, ST, OBC and minority groups will benefit from the establishment of integrated schools and how many will get admissions.

HC allows IPS officer Mohanty to continue in TG till CAT verdict

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Monday directed the Centre and the Governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to allow IPS officer Abhishek Mohanty to continue serving in Telangana until the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) delivers its verdict on his cadre allocation plea.

The directive was issued by a division bench comprising Justices Abhinand Kumar Shavili and E. Tirumala Devi while disposing of Mohanty's petition challenging his allocation to Andhra Pradesh.

Mohanty had approached the High Court seeking a nod to remain in the Telangana cadre, arguing that the earlier G.O. RT No. 583 issued on March 14, 2022, by the Telangana Government had allotted him to Telangana.

He asserted that his present allocation to Andhra Pradesh went against that order and so should be stayed until the CAT concludes its proceedings.

The High Court, after hearing the arguments, ruled in favour of allowing him to continue in Telangana till the tribunal's final orders on the matter.



No Muslim Minister in Cong Cabinet: KTR Accuses govt of 'neglecting' minorities

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR) lashed out at the Congress's Telangana Government and accused it of 'neglecting' minorities and failing to implement promises outlined in its Minority Declaration.

KTR pointed out a historic anomaly in the current Congress government, stating, "Wherever Congress rules in India, minorities have cabinet representation. But for the first time in Telangana's history, we see a Congress government with no minority representation. This is a new practice they have introduced."

Speaking at an Iftar dinner host-



ed by the BRS at the Telangana Bhavan on the occasion of Ramadan, KTR extended heartfelt greetings to fasting Muslims and took part in the prayers held during the event.

In a strongly worded address, KTR contrasted the BRS's tenure under former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) with the current administration.

2

Schedule announced for Council polls from Hyd local authorities' constituency

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Election Commission of India has announced the biennial election schedule for a seat in the Telangana Legislative Council from the Hyderabad Local Authorities' Constituency, after the retirement of sitting member MS Prabhakar Rao on May 1.

Chief Electoral Officer C. Sudharshan Reddy said the Model Code of Conduct has come into effect in the concerned constituency and that all political parties, candidates and officials must comply with the ECI's guidelines during the election period.

ELECTION SCHEDULE:

- Issue of notification: March 28, 2025 (Friday)
- Last date for filing nominations: April 4, 2025 (Friday)
- Scrutiny of nominations: April 7, 2025 (Monday)
- Last date for withdrawal of candidatures: April 9, 2025 (Wednesday)
- Date of poll: April 23, 2025 (Wednesday)
- Polling Hours: 8 am to 4 pm
- Counting of votes: April 25, 2025 (Friday)
- Completion of the election process: April 29, 2025 (Tuesday)
- The Election Commission has requested all stakeholders to strictly follow the election code to ensure free and fair elections. Details are available on the Commission's website: www.eci.gov.in.

Centre approves 3 EMCs, 1CFC for TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) notified the Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC) scheme and the Modified Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC 2.0) scheme to provide world-class infrastructure with common facilities for attracting electronics manufacturers, the Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology, Jitin Prasada, said.

As per these schemes, MeitY has approved three EMCs and a CFC project on an area of 1,292.87 acres with an outlay of Rs 1778.86 crore, including a Central financial assistance of Rs 724.12 crore in Telangana.

Responding to a question by the Congress's Bhongir MP, Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, in the Lok Sabha on whether the Government of Telangana has requested the revival

of the Information Technology Investment Region (ITIR) for Hyderabad, the Union Minister said in his written reply that the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) had notified Information Technology Investment Region (ITIR) policy on May 28, 2008, to develop a self-contained integrated township for speeding up the growth of Information Technology (IT)/Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES)/Electronic Hardware Manufacturing (EHM) units.

Under this policy, an application for the establishment of an ITIR in Hyderabad was received from the TG Government (erstwhile Government of United Andhra Pradesh) which was approved on 13.11.2013. Subsequently, a review of ITIR Policy 2008 was undertaken and ITIR Policy Resolution, 2008, was discontinued in 2017 and every-

thing as per the policy was closed.

On another question of Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy regarding whether the Government of Telangana has sent any proposals for restructuring the debt of corporations or their Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) and whether any instructions have been issued to financial institutions for the restructuring of loans that were extended to the Corporations/SPVs owned by the Government of Telangana and whether they are now serviced from the State's Consolidated Fund and whether their details are available, the Union Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance, Pankaj Chaudhary, said in a written reply that a request was received from the TG Government regarding the restructuring of loans raised by Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) that are serviced from the State's Consolidated Fund for the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme.

Hyd emerges as hyperscaler data centre hub

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad has carved out a prominent niche in India's booming data centre (DC) landscape, with the city witnessing strong interest from hyperscaler giants even though its share in the overall national DC capacity remains at just four per cent.

ANAROCK's latest report on India's data centre industry in Hyderabad, Navi Mumbai and Pune says Hyderabad has emerged as one of the top three destinations for hyperscaler-led self-built data centre facilities. The city has seen approximately 440 acres marked out in recent years for large-scale data centres. This interest comes despite MMR and Chennai together accounting for 70 per cent of India's current DC stock.

Occupancy in Hyderabad-based data centres has reached 69 per cent, positioning it among the most



ANAROCK's latest report on India's data centre industry in Hyderabad, Navi Mumbai and Pune says Hyderabad has emerged as one of the top three destinations for hyperscaler-led self-built data centre facilities

actively utilised capacities in the country. The city is increasingly being viewed as a strategic secondary location, supporting the growing demand for AI workloads, cloud computing, and content delivery.

India's DC capacity is projected to grow from 1.4 GW in 2024 to 2.0 GW in 2025, and 2.6 GW by 2027. While MMR and Chennai dominate, Hyderabad's growth potential is significant, especially in the context of its relatively low data centre penetration highlighted by India's mere 1 MW per million Internet users compared to China's 4 MW and the US's 51 MW.

The report also indicates that the data centre industry in India has attracted over USD 6.5 billion in equity commitments after 2014 and is set for massive expansion, driven by the adoption of generative AI, OTT consumption, and e-commerce.

Hailstorms destroyed crops in 11,298 acres: Tummala

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao asked officials to carry out a farmer-wise survey and submit a final report on the crop damage caused by the hailstorms which lashed many parts of the state between March 21 and 23. Preliminary estimates indicate damage to crops in over 11,298 acres spread across 64 mandals in 13 districts.

He said that data received so far indicates that paddy was the most affected crop, accounting for damage in 6,670 acres, followed by maize in 4,100 acres and mango in 309 acres. The rest of the affected area had horticultural and agricultural crops, Tummala said on Monday.

He said that officials of the Agriculture Department have been asked to complete the survey at the earliest so that compensation can be released fast. "Once the final report is submitted, the government will take steps to ensure compensation is paid to affected farmers," he assured.

He stressed the importance of timely support to farmers in distress and reiterated the government's commitment to the farming community facing natural calamities.

No disputes with any MLA, says Ponguleti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy made it clear that he has no disputes with Jachderla MLA J. Anirudh Reddy.

complete the digging of the SLBC tunnel manually if it is not possible with the TBM. "The government has decided to dig the remaining part of the SLBC tunnel in the way the Veligonda tunnel in AP was dug. The height at the place where the accident took place is 510 meters. The tunnel distance is 41.6 km and 9.5 km is left for completion of the tunnel. There will be an increase of half a km if a curve is taken. The curve will be dug manually. It takes eight months to change the machine's bearing," the Minister said.

Oppose delimitation as TG can lose 2 & AP 4 to 5 LS seats: VH

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Senior Congress leader V. Hanumantha Rao said there is no need for delimitation as Telangana might lose two Parliament constituencies and Andhra Pradesh four to five seats.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy conducted a BC caste census and passed a Bill in the Assembly providing 42 per cent reservations and sent it to the Centre. The Bill should be approved in Parliament. From here, the CM is trying to meet Prime Minister Modi and Opposition Leader Rahul Gandhi regarding this. All parties should come together, he appealed. If delimitation is implemented now on population basis South India would lose. All political parties should oppose this, he said.

Congress govt will stand by Gajwel: CM

KCR ignoring Assembly, say Gajwel Cong leaders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hundreds of Congress leaders and workers from Gajwel constituency, led by senior party leader Narsareddy, met Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Monday demanding that former Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's Membership in the Assembly be cancelled for repeatedly skipping the House.



Later, Gajwel Congress leaders said they would also be submitting a petition to the Governor at the Raj Bhavan, formally seeking action against KCR for breach of constitutional duty as an MLA.

He expressed a personal connection to Gajwel, assuring that the Praja Palana Government would continue to stand by the constituency in ensuring welfare and development.

Revanth's cheap politics won't work in Gajwel: Harish

PNS ■ GAJWEL

BRS MLA Harish Rao launched a blistering attack on Chief Minister Revanth Reddy during a press meeting in Gajwel on Monday, accusing him of indulging in cheap, bankrupt politics while ignoring the legacy of development laid down by BRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

Harish condemns arrest of ASHA workers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Senior BRS MLA Harish Rao condemned the large-scale arrests of ASHA workers all over Telangana and accused the Congress government of treating the lady health workers with contempt.

Harish said the Congress government's betrayal has become evident to all in just 15 months. "They came to power on the back of promises, but now, to escape accountability, they are using force," he said. He slammed the government for its failure to implement promises despite having completed 15 months in power and presenting two full budgets. "How long will Revanth Reddy continue to make excuses?" he asked.

IAS officer Lotheti to monitor SLBC tunnel rescue ops

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy reviewed rescue operations at the SLBC tunnel in Nagar Kurnool district and asked officials to intensify efforts to trace the missing workers trapped in the February 22 mishap. The review was held in the Assembly Committee Hall on Monday.

Management and Colonel Prakshit Mehra presented a detailed progress report on the rescue operations, which have now been going on for nearly a month.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that 25 agencies, including departments from both the Central and state governments and private firms, are engaged in the mission, with nearly 700 personnel working on site. They are using welding and cutting equipment to remove rocks and tunnel boring machine (TBM) components from the collapsed section. Debris, silt and water are being cleared constantly to facilitate movement.

A PowerPoint presentation showing images from the day of the incident and the current situation in the tunnel was also shown to the Chief Minister. The incident took place nearly 14 km from the inlet, in a zone where light and air circulation are minimal, making rescue operations extremely complex.

Experts have marked a 30-metre stretch as a "high-risk zone." Geological experts from the GSI and the NGR have advised that any rescue ops in the stretch must proceed with extreme caution after a scientific evaluation.

The Chief Minister insisted that locating the remaining trapped workers should be given top priority and requested officials to obtain all permissions from the Centre to proceed with emergency works. He also called for alternative strategies if required and said that operations should be guided strictly as per the recommendations of expert committees.

SC recommends...

The association further demanded a review of judgements delivered by the judge. "All the judgements delivered by Justice Yashwant Varma during his tenure of a judge at Allahabad High Court and Delhi High Court be reviewed in order to inspire confidence of people at large to regain public faith in the judicial system." But some legal experts termed the demand as "preposterous", "premature" and "unjustified".

Centre notifies 24% hike in salaries for MPs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday notified a 24 per cent hike in the salaries of members of Parliament with effect from April 1, 2023, on the basis of the Cost Inflation Index, taking their monthly salaries to Rs 1.24 lakh besides certain allowances and perks.

Registration charges...

The rest would be LRS. Some sub-registrars have been suspended for not ensuring that LRS has been done and for functioning as they liked. We introduced LRS keeping that in mind. A survey map is mandatory for registration. We will also hold a survey for those who do not have a map," he said.

'Per capita water ...

Andhra is allegedly diverting 330 TMCs to areas like Banakacherla and planning 150 TMCs storage at Bollapalli. Telangana argued this was unacceptable while its inside-basin projects like the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme (PRLIS) remains water-starved.

Union Ministers respond positively to Ponnam's Navodaya School move

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Ministers Ashwini Vaishnav and Jayant Chaudhary responded affirmatively to the proposals submitted by Telangana's Transport and BC Welfare Minister Ponnam Prabhakar, regarding key public demands in education and rail connectivity.

Chaudhary wrote back to Ponnam confirming that the Centre has approved a plan to open 28 new Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas across the country, including seven in Telangana.



Kavitha slams Centre's Waqf Bill, calls Revanth 'Flight Mode CM'

PNS ■ BANSWADA

BRS MLC Kavitha on Sunday sharply attacked both the Centre and the state government and declared that the BRS would strongly oppose the Waqf Board Amendment Bill introduced by the BJP-led Centre.

Centre or state take against them. We have stood by you before and we will always stand by you." She said people all over Telangana were living in fear under the Congress government, and that the real estate sector had suffered a serious blow.

New TG High Court...

According to the tender, the project comprises a judicial campus that includes multiple court blocks, advocate chambers, auditoriums, administrative blocks, bungalows for judges and the Chief Justice, parking facility, and civic infrastructure such as underground sumps, STPs, a police block and a fire station.

No Muslim ...

Under KCR's leadership, we transcended religious boundaries, providing government support for all festivals and nurturing the Ganga-Jamuna Tezheeb culture to promote peace," he said.

Continued from page 1

Interested contractors can access the bid documents on the government's e-procurement portal (www.tender.telangana.gov.in) from March 22 to April 15.

The detailed design of the new High Court includes a Main Court Block valued at over Rs 357 crore, a Judges Bungalow cluster worth Rs 78 crore, and a Rs 93 crore public parking facility. Residential buildings for judges and supporting staff, a Bar Council office and public amenities have also been incorporated into the master plan.

The bidder must meet a rigorous physical work execution threshold — such as casting over 14,800 cubic meters of RCC in a single financial year — and must not have applied for or undergone corporate debt restructuring in the last seven years. Failing to furnish genuine documents or non-compliance with bid conditions will lead to disqualification and blacklisting.



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**Editor's
TAKE**

Need for judicial accountability

The erosion of judicial integrity weakens the very foundation of democracy

The judiciary is often regarded as the last bastion of justice, fairness, and accountability. However, recent reports of large sums of unaccounted cash allegedly found in the residence of a judge in the Delhi High Court have once again raised serious concerns about corruption within the judicial system. Despite numerous allegations of corruption, impeachment proceedings against a Supreme Court or High Court judge have been initiated only four times in India's history. This raises pressing questions about the effectiveness of the current mechanisms in place to tackle judicial corruption and the urgent need for reform.

Our judicial system provides two primary mechanisms to deal with allegations of corruption against Supreme Court and High Court judges. The first is an in-house procedure established by the Supreme Court in 1999. Under this mechanism, complaints against judges are examined internally by the Chief Justice of India or the concerned High Court Chief Justice. If the allegations are deemed serious, a three-member committee comprising senior judges conducts an inquiry. However, this process is informal, lacks transparency, and rarely results in significant disciplinary action beyond an advisory to resign or a withdrawal of judicial work.

The second mechanism is impeachment by Parliament, a process enshrined in the Indian Constitution. However, the high threshold required—support from a two-thirds majority in both houses—makes impeachment an impractical tool. It is indeed a tedious process which hardly ever result in impeachment.

It is intriguing why corrupt judges remain unpunished. Several factors contribute to the de facto impunity enjoyed by judges. The in-house procedure lacks transparency, as inquiry reports remain confidential. The public and legal community remain unaware of actions taken against corrupt judges. But the biggest reason why judges go unpunished for their misdeeds is contempt laws. India's strict contempt of court laws make it difficult to openly discuss or investigate corruption allegations against judges. This suppresses public scrutiny and independent journalistic investigations. Besides, unlike other government institutions, the judiciary largely regulates itself, leading to a conflict of interest. An independent body to oversee judicial conduct is absent. Impeachment, the only constitutional method for removal, is highly politicised and seldom pursued, making it an ineffective deterrent.

To restore public trust and ensure accountability within the judiciary, the transparency in the system is the first condition. The in-house procedure must be made more transparent. Inquiry reports should be made public, and disciplinary actions against judges must be disclosed to prevent a culture of secrecy.

Contempt laws must be relaxed to allow greater public discourse and media scrutiny of judicial corruption. Establishing an autonomous commission to investigate judicial corruption, comprising retired judges, legal experts, and public representatives, would ensure impartiality and reduce conflicts of interest. The current impeachment mechanism is ineffective due to its high procedural threshold. Judges should be required to publicly disclose their assets and financial dealings periodically, similar to elected officials. This can serve as a deterrent.

The judiciary serves as the bedrock of democracy, and any erosion of its integrity weakens the very foundation of justice.

A system or institution is only as strong as the individuals who uphold it. If those in positions of power falter, there must be a robust and fool-proof mechanism to safeguard the sanctity of the judiciary and restore public trust.

Reviving the Yamuna

The newly elected Delhi government has placed the sustainable revitalisation of the Yamuna River at the forefront of its environmental agenda

The recently elected Delhi government has prioritised the sustainable cleaning and revitalisation of the Yamuna River in its environmentally friendly development plan. In line with this vision, the central government aims to convert the Yamuna into an exemplary river, establishing a standard for analogous restoration initiatives in other urban areas. Although efforts to reduce pollution from industrial effluents, drainage systems, and waste management are essential, the lasting effectiveness of this mission will significantly depend on scientific afforestation along the riverbanks.

The effort to beautify the banks of the Yamuna is an essential move towards revitalising the river's previous splendour. By combining sustainable tree planting with pollution management strategies, Delhi's authorities seek to establish a healthier, more robust river system that can act as an example for urban river restoration throughout the nation.

A crucial part of this strategy involves the organised planting of indigenous tree varieties and herbal plants. Creating herbal gardens in key locations throughout the river basin could greatly improve the ecological well-being of the Yamuna. This type of vegetation acts as a natural filter, capturing pollutants such as chemicals, fertilisers, and sediments before they enter the river, thus enhancing water quality. Furthermore, these plants offer essential habitats for birds, insects, and animals, promoting biodiversity and reinforcing the local ecosystem. Apart from ecological advantages, planting trees along the riverbanks is essential for stabilising soil and averting erosion, thereby lowering the chances of land degradation and flooding. The deeply established vegetation helps in groundwater replenishment by enabling rainwater to seep into the soil instead of being wasted as surface runoff.

Creating herbal gardens cum corridors that include medicinal plants, as well as indigenous trees and flora, close to the Yamuna River presents a unique opportunity with extensive advantages. In addition to improving the river's ecological well-being, this project presents considerable economic opportunities by providing medicinal herbs to the Ayurvedic and pharmaceutical sectors. The growing of these plants supports the Delhi government's larger initiatives to restore the Yamuna, tackle water pollution, and encourage sustainable water resource management.

As the demand for medicinal plants increases, species including Indian Barberry (Daruhaladi), Licorice (Mulethi), Bael, Isabgol, Atis, Guggul, Amla, Senna, Brahmi, Jatamansi, Madhuanashini, Kalmegh, Shatavari, Ashwagandha, Chirayata, Katuki,



Shankhpushpi, Ashoka, Giloy, Kokum, and Safed Musli are especially valued in Ayurvedic medicine. Throughout India, farmers growing these crops-like Shankhpushpi, Atis, Kuth, Kutki, Kapikachhu, and Karanja have experienced notable rises in their earnings, aiding the growth of the Ayurvedic agricultural industry.

Several riverside plant species can further support this effort, including Latjeera, Moringa (Sahjan), Holy Basil (Tulsi), Khokli (Hulhul), Billy Goat Weed (Gandhi Buti), Garundi, Slender Amaranth (Chaulai), Apple of Sodom (Aak), Coco Grass (Nagarmotha), Egyptian Crowfoot (Murag), and Marvel Grass (Chimini). These plants not only contribute to ecological balance but also offer medicinal properties. For example, Latjeera is traditionally used to treat malaria, dysentery, asthma, hypertension, and diabetes, while Moringa is renowned for its high nutritional value and water purification abilities. Similarly, Tulsi plays a vital role in traditional Indian medicine, recognised for its immunity-boosting properties. Other suitable species for afforestation along the Yamuna include Mangium Babool, which thrives in alluvial soils, Peppermint, known for aiding digestion, Tamarind, which adapts well to various soil types and Senna, valued for its medicinal applications. Additionally, Chamomile is widely used for its calming effects, while Lemongrass, Shatavari, and Chebulic Myrobalan (Harad) offer both ecological and health benefits.

Beyond their medicinal value, these plants serve as natural water purifiers by filtering pollutants and improving water quality. They absorb harmful gases, mitigate noise pollution, reduce heat, and capture dust, making them effective air and water purifiers.

The cultivation of medicinal plants also supports biodiversity by creating habitats for diverse species, strengthening ecological balance.

Importantly, this initiative offers significant economic prospects for local communities. The growing, handling, and selling of medicinal plants can create a reliable source of revenue, encouraging business initiatives and enhancing the local economy. Additionally, conserving these plants aids in protecting traditional knowledge systems, guaranteeing that indigenous wisdom is transmitted across generations. Promoting herbal medicine can lessen dependence on synthetic drugs, fostering a transition to natural and sustainable healthcare methods. Thus by employing a comprehensive strategy that combines ecological restoration, economic development, and the safeguarding of traditional knowledge, the rejuvenation of the Yamuna River can act as a blueprint for sustainable management of

urban rivers throughout India. A thoughtfully designed program aimed at nurturing and maintaining medicinal plants by the Yamuna River can act as an effective means for ecological restoration and economic growth. By encouraging areas rich in biodiversity, this initiative could draw visitors interested in traditional healing methods, thus boosting ecotourism and strengthening economic sustainability.

For the project to achieve meaningful success, an inclusive strategy that actively involves the local farming community is crucial. Farmers cultivating in the Yamuna floodplain must be recognised as key stakeholders, serving as ecological guardians in the river restoration initiative. Instead of seeing their involvement as a hurdle, these farmers ought to be viewed as essential collaborators in this distinctive urban medicinal planting initiative. Globally, countries like Singapore and South Korea have effectively rejuvenated urban riverbanks while integrating sustainable agricultural practices involving local farmers, already engaged in cultivating vegetables and other crops in the region. India can draw from these examples by adopting a balanced approach that maintains agriculture while enhancing the health of the Yamuna.



SATENDRA SINGH

(The writer is a former Executive Director, National Institute of Disaster Management and DG-AYUSH, Health Department, Bihar Government. Views expressed are personal)

Leaderspeak



I have been a legislator for 36 years and I am well aware of my responsibilities. I possess basic common sense and would never propose altering the Constitution. My remarks have been taken out of context. They are misquoting me. I merely pointed out that several changes occur over time due to judicial rulings. Nowhere, did I suggest that we intend to modify the Constitution. We are a national party, we know what the Constitution is.

DK SHIVAKUMAR, DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER OF KARNATAKA



SECOND Opinion

Keeping up with the Joneses is an old phrase that refers to the constant pressure of "keeping up" with the social status and wealth of one's friends and neighbours.

Research shows that this phrase originated with the Jones family, a wealthy and prominent New Yorker who began building elegant and grand mansions. In response, other New Yorkers tried to outdo them by constructing even more elaborate homes in the Hudson Valley.

In 1853, Elizabeth S. Jones built Wyndcliffe, a 24-room ornate mansion designed in the style of a Scottish castle. Soon, other wealthy families started building extravagant estates to showcase their wealth. This competition gave rise to the phrase "keeping up with the Joneses."

Interestingly, the sentiment behind this phrase has persisted even to this day. I have observed similar scenarios within my circle of friends. I remember, Anita and Sheila had been best friends for years. When Anita bought a beautiful three-bedroom house in an upscale neighbourhood, she couldn't wait to show her house to Sheila. "This place is amazing!" remarked Sheila as she admired the high ceilings and designer kitchen. It must have cost a fortune!

Anita beamed. "It was a bit pricey, but totally worth it."



SHARMILA VAIDYA

The neighborhood is great, and the schools are top notch."

That evening Sheila went home feeling restless and envious of her friend. She and her husband had been considering upgrading their townhouse. Within three weeks, they found a house that was much bigger and grander than their friend's, located in a very upscale neighbourhood. However, they ended up spending more than they had budgeted. While they achieved their goal of finding a more impressive home, the financial strain left them constantly stressed.

It took me by surprise, when I read in the Forbes magazine that the average size of a home has tripled in the past 50 years, even with the family size consistently getting smaller. In addition, one in 10 Americans have to rent a storage unit, because they can't fit all of their stuff inside their giant homes.

Here is another scenario I observed. David, one of our friends, was ecstatic when he bought a luxury car. However, his excitement was short lived, when a friend arrived in a Mercedes - a more expensive car and a true status symbol. Suddenly, the pride David once felt began to fade. The same car he had proudly shown off to his neighbours and friends no longer seemed impressive. Before long, he stopped parking it outside his garage, as what once brought him joy now felt overshadowed.

There are many similar instances that we observe daily.

We take immense pleasure in portraying our best moments in life to the world, be it an expensive vacation, designer clothes, the latest gadgets or our busy social calendar. We are constantly trying to flaunt our perfect lifestyle to the world, especially on social media. Social media is one of the most powerful sources of displaying our choicest moments, which puts us in constant pressure and competition with each other. But why do we behave this way?

One can argue that it's just human behaviour, influenced by peer pressure, consumerism, commercialisation, social media or all of the above. However, there should be an understanding that this facade can make us feel inadequate, burdened with financial stress with mounting debt and emotional stress in the form of anxiety and depression. It is like two parallel lines endlessly chasing each other, never quite meeting. Does it ever end? Maybe—when we stop measuring our worth against others and start defining fulfilment on our terms.

Instead of chasing status symbols, we should focus on what genuinely brings happiness—strong relationships, meaningful experiences, and financial stability. Breaking free from this cycle requires shifting our perspective, redefining success, and embracing gratitude. After all, wealth is not about what we own but about how fulfilled we feel.

The moment we stop comparing and start living for ourselves, we finally win the race that never truly existed.

(The writer is Houston based educator and author. Views expressed are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Regulating the coaching centres

Madam—It is an appreciable step of Rajasthan government to enact 'The Rajasthan Coaching Centres (Control and Regulation) Bill' which aims at regulating Coaching Centres to curb the menace of student suicides which we find in the media frequently. Due to the toxic environment of coaching centres and particularly at Rajasthan's Kota which has become the country's education hub and it has been playing havoc with the young minds.

The Speaker Om Parksh Birla is member of Parliament from Kota is also trying to find the ways how the best can be done in this direction. Kota, home to the coaching market worth ₹5000 Crore, has become a killing field where dreams die at the altar of unreasonable expectations fuelled by parental and peer pressure. Here it is worth mentionable that parents expectations play a major part in this unholy happenings and it is expected from the parents that they should be aware about the actual capabilities of their sons or daughters. A sense of numbness has set in with several cases of student suicides being reported every year for over a decade now. At least six students are reported to have died by suicide in the town since the start of this year. The Bill mandates that coaching centres with over 50 students must register and meet specific standards to qualify for registration, in a bid to ensure greater accountability.

YASH PAL RALHAN | JALANDHAR

Carnage in Gaza continues

Madam—Refer to, "Israel strikes again, kill 26 Palestinians in Gaza" (March 24). The Gaza crisis is a stark illustration of the global order's failures, revealing Western double standards and the impotence of international institutions. The conflict transcends the Israeli-Palestinian dynamic, exposing a systemic breakdown in upholding international law and human rights. The disproportionate response and the international community's inability to hold Israel accountable highlight a disturbing trend.

Powerful nations, particularly in the West, often prioritise geopolitical interests over universal principles, leading to accusations of hypocrisy and eroding the credibility of international norms. The silence or muted criticism from these actors emboldens perpetrators and deepens the sense of injustice among those affected. International institutions like the UN, designed to prevent such conflicts, appear powerless. Security Council resolutions are vetoed, and humanitarian aid is often insufficient or obstructed. This impotence fosters a sense of disillusionment, particularly in the global South, where Western-led governance models are increasingly viewed with skepticism.

The selective application of international law further fuels this perception, creating a breeding ground for resentment and instability.

AMARJEET KUMAR | HAZARIBAGH

Government sets the goal to eradicate TB

Madam—Tuberculosis (TB) is not merely a physical ailment, it is a mirror reflecting societal inequalities, economic hardships, and human insensitivity. This disease primarily spreads among those trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty, malnutrition, and unsanitary living conditions. Indian society has long perceived it as a curse, yet the reality remains that it can afflict anyone, regardless of their social or economic background.

The Government of India has set an ambitious goal of eradicating TB by 2025, five years ahead of the global target of 2030. Recent data indicates a 17.7 per cent decline in TB cases between 2015 and 2023, with a 21.4 per cent reduction in mortality rates. While this progress is encouraging, the stark reality remains that over 2.7 Million new cases emerged in 2023 alone, underscoring the deep-rooted nature of the disease. Under the "Nikshay Poshan Yojana," TB patients receive a monthly allowance of ₹500 as nutritional support, but this amount falls short of meeting their dietary needs. Furthermore, the rise in drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) cases is making treatment increasingly complex and prolonged.

The fight against TB extends beyond the medical domain; it must also be waged in the realm of social awareness. This disease does not merely inflict physical suffering, it also subjects patients to societal exclusion and mental distress.

SACHIN TRIPATHI | SATNA

KUDOS TO THE PIONEER FOR ITS BRAND NEW LOOK

I am a long-time reader of the Pioneer and I just wanted to take a moment to appreciate the incredible transformation the newspaper has undergone. A year ago, there wasn't even a dedicated Vivacity page and now, the entire features section has evolved into something truly special. It's amazing to see a newspaper giving such dedicated space to books, art, culture and fashion, very few do that. The way the Pioneer is showcasing fashion even in today's edition is absolutely refreshing.

I'm writing this email specifically because of Agenda (Sunday, March 23). The interview with Saurabh Shukla, conducted by Sakshi Priya, was one of the best I've ever read. It didn't sound like another promotional piece, it felt raw, personal. The way it was structured, the choice of photographs and the overall presentation, everything was just perfect. As a reader, it feels immersive, like I am



actually part of the interview while reading it. Thank you for delivering such exceptional content. Also, I have to mention how much I appreciate the food section; it's such a great addition! Thank you for making the Pioneer such an engaging and meaningful read. It's a pleasure to pick up the paper every day.

AMIT DAS | KOLKATA

Please send your letter to the letterstopioneer@gmail.com. In not more than 400 words. We appreciate your feedback.

NO RULES, JUST VIBES

Inside the making of *5 Baje* with three of India's boldest artistes



TEJAL SINHA
 tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

The Indian hip-hop and indie music scene has been steadily evolving, with artistes fearlessly experimenting and blending genres to carve out new sonic landscapes. Enter *5 Baje*—a track that seamlessly fuses rap, R&B and indie vibes, bringing together the distinct styles of The Siege, Natiq and Shy Wry. More than just a song, *5 Baje* is a testament to artistic collaboration, vulnerability and breaking creative boundaries.

In an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, the trio delves into the meaning behind their stage names, their dynamic creative process, and how *5 Baje* fits into India's ever-expanding underground music movement. They also share insights on navigating the fine balance between artistry and industry, the influence of genre-fluidity in modern music and what's next on their sonic journeys.

Excerpts from the interview

THE SIEGE: Your stage name 'The Siege' is bold and powerful. What's the meaning behind it, and how does it represent your journey in hip-hop?
 My government name is Siegen. I just shortened it to Siege, there's no deeper meaning behind this to be honest.

NATIQ: Your name, Natiq, means 'eloquent speaker'. How did you come up with it, and do you feel it represents your artistic identity?
 My nanu named me after the Urdu poet Ali Akbar Natiq. I had always liked how it was not a very common name, so I decided to release music under it, it also made it more personal. I'm not much of a speaker though, I'm very introverted. As an artist, I strive to put together sounds that communicate emotions clearly and powerfully, maybe like an eloquent speaker would. In that way, my name feels like a perfect fit for what I do.

SHY WRY: Your name Shy Wry has an interesting contrast. What's the story behind it, and does it reflect something personal about you?
 I've always had a shy personality when it comes to expression. However, I felt this nature contrasted with the kind of craft and dealings I was going to be engaged in. In 2018, I finally decided to start putting my songs out on YouTube. I had to come up with a name, and I knew I wasn't going to go official with my government name. "Shy," as the word suggests, means reserved or quiet and "Wry" means disappointment. This name serves as a constant reminder that

I would be an utter disappointment to myself if I shy away—remaining unexpressive in my craft.

THE SIEGE: *5 Baje* is an exciting collaboration blending rap, R&B, and indie. How did you approach crafting your verse for this track?
 I just heard this instrumental in my head and thought of mixing it up a little bit. The verse came to me naturally at 5 AM, the usual hours for introspection.

NATIQ: *5 Baje* sees you blending your signature R&B sound with rap and indie vibes. How did you ensure your style stood out on the track?
 I think it was more about letting all three artist's styles naturally blend than trying to make a particular style stand out. I prefer letting everyone do their thing and seeing where it goes, and most of the time, it falls into place. That was the case with *5 Baje* as well.

SHY WRY: *5 Baje* is a fusion of multiple genres. What was your role in shaping the track's overall sound?
 It's common for modern-day artists to move away from being confined to a single genre. However, they are often boxed into categories for the sake of nomenclature and classification.

We don't aim to serve that purpose or create more confusion—we're simply dedicated to delivering a fused blend of fresh sounds. You can take this as a hint that more genre-blending music is on the way. Our approach was never restricted; we simply brought the best of our capabilities to the table and let the results speak for themselves.

THE SIEGE: The underground hip-hop scene in India is constantly evolving. How do you think *5 Baje* fits into this movement?
 I'm hoping it encourages rappers to be a little more vulnerable in their songs and think of newer ways to collaborate. We've also made sure we introduce something new in every part of the song, and I hope it encourages such innovation even more.

NATIQ: The song carries a unique energy. What was the creative process like, and how did you and The Siege complement each other on this track?
 Siege has been a frequent collaborator for a while now and we've always tried to create something out of our comfort zone each time. The song started with a rough idea of the instrumental that I shared with Siege. I remember talking to him about creating something with Pop/R&B elements sometime during the making of our project *Bhaagna, Chhupna, Doobna* as well. The process is usually like a call-and-response thing—I send over the instrumental, he writes and records over it, then I do additional arrangement/production over it, and it was the same for this one. We bounced ideas off each other and figured things out as we went. For example, after



we had the vocals laid out, Siege suggested we try adding saxophone runs towards the end of the song. It worked out beautifully and gave the track a perfect ending.

SHY WRY: This song brings together artists from different backgrounds. How did that influence your creative approach to *5 Baje*?
 We can't really quantify who brought what and in what quantity. The whole process was all over the place. The beat went lying around for months on my WhatsApp until it was the right time to write on it. The process was like fishing for me—I waited. For Natiq or Siege, I'm sure the process would've been quite different as well.

THE SIEGE: Your discography has a mix of hard-hitting rap and introspective tracks. Do you see yourself experimenting with new sounds like *5 Baje* more often?
 I am working on stepping out of my comfort zone a little more often. I'm also trying to open up to collaborating with people and blending multiple talents together as a songwriter. So yeah, I hope the experimentation never stops.

NATIQ: R&B is still an emerging genre in India. Do you think *5 Baje* will help bridge the gap between rap, indie, and mainstream audiences?
 I tend to not see music as something bound by genres, as an artist and a listener both. I've always approached music with an open mind. With *5 Baje*, the goal wasn't to fit into a specific category but to create something that feels authentic, fresh, and something we enjoy making as well. I think a lot of Indian artists have chosen to not be bound by genres and experiment with all kinds of sounds in recent times and *5 Baje* is just another step in that direction.

SHY WRY: Balancing music and studies at IIM Rohtak must be challenging. How do you manage both, and do they ever influence each other?
 We have a trimester system here, so each year we have three terms to devour (or survive). I've been at this institute long enough to understand the intensity of its demanding hours each term. I time and manage my musical pursuits and academic submissions accordingly. Not a joke, it really was exhausting—sometimes unrewarding. Now that my MBA is over, I'm dedicated to creating and delivering more music in the coming months.

I've always tried to but failed to coordinate these two spheres simultaneously. Academics and music are like disjoint sets; they just can't coexist together for me. But it's not over for me—I'll continue this personal research to find the relationships between the two. Maybe those Venns will meet someday.



Modern battle against tuberculosis Innovations saving lives

India contributes nearly a quarter of the global burden of tuberculosis (TB) and continues to be a significant public health challenge in the country. Fortunately, the past two decades have witnessed innovations in diagnosis and treatment that are changing the TB care landscape and providing a stepping stone for TB control and eventual elimination in India. Advancements in TB Diagnosis A timely diagnosis is the first step for controlling TB. Conventional diagnostic tools like sputum smear microscopy have limited sensitivity and do not capture drug-resistant strains. India has responded to these challenges by adopting a range of novel diagnostic tools:

Truenat: Truenat, an invention of the Goa-based Molbio Diagnostics, is a point-of-care, chip-based molecular test for TB and rifampicin resistance. Truenat can be used to give an output within an hour helping in timely treatment decisions, and was approved by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2020. Because it does not require much infrastructure and is portable, it is particularly useful in remote or resource-poor settings.

eCompliance: This system, which is based on biometrics, is used to ensure compliance with TB treatment protocols. eCompliance, for example, is a concept that employs a fingerprint or iris scan to track patients as they arrive to take their medications and is implemented by organizations like Operation ASHA. It improves the effectiveness of TB programs by reducing default rates and ensuring supervised treatment.

Innovations in TB treatment

As new strains of drug-resistant TB have come into play, new measures of approach to infection are required:

Bedaquiline: Developed by an international team of researchers including Indian scientist Anil Koul, Bedaquiline is an effective treatment for multi-drug-resistant

TB (MDR-TB). It has conditional marketing authorisation in several countries including India and is included in the national TB elimination plans. India is using it since 2019, when it was made available through over 500 drug-resistant TB centers to ensure the #EndTB program by the Health Ministry. Shorter Treatment Regimens: Shorter and simpler TB treatment regimens are being explored, led by researchers including Dr. Zarir Udwadia. Work has been done in developing these regimens for better compliance and results in the present patients.

Community: Based Approaches Building community engagement is critical for TB programs to work: **Operation ASHA:** This non-profit organization provides TB treatment via the DOTs (Directly Observed Therapy, Short-Course) approach, offering clinics in easily accessible and familiar locations (shop, temple, etc.) which decreases stigma and increases access to care. This model, which can be replicated in other countries, has been proven to be effective. Challenges and the Road Ahead Yet, such strides do not come without hurdles:

Awareness and Stigma: More is still needed for informing communities about symptoms of TB and alleviating the stigma associated with it. Healthcare infrastructure: In order to support the rapid scaling of new diagnostic and clinical tools, healthcare systems need to be strengthened.

Funding and resources: Motorised investments are needed for survival and growth of TB control programs. Take home lesson for India is that TB diagnosis and treatment innovations are changing the face of battle against a disease from ancient time. The country is a nation with high rate of TB (ceasing to be a public health problem) with marked utilisation of newer technologies as well as community approaches.

(The author, Dr. Sameer Bhati, Director of Star Imaging and Path Lab Pvt. Ltd.)

'I love telling female-driven stories, but I also want to direct male-centric stories'

PNS| HYDERABAD

Director Sonam Nair's *Duphainya* has struck a chord with audiences for its refreshing take on social issues like dowry, colorism and women's empowerment—all wrapped in an entertaining and heartwarming narrative. The series, which has received widespread appreciation, is not just about challenging societal norms but also about embracing the beauty of tradition, family and community living.

In a conversation about her latest work, Sonam Nair shares the inspiration behind *Duphainya*, the emotional moments on set, and how she envisions the future of storytelling for female filmmakers.

The journey of *Duphainya* began when writers Avinash and Chirag, along with creators and producers Shubh and Salona, approached Sonam with the script. What instantly drew her in was the way the story blended humour with strong messaging. "It had such funny scenes but such great messaging that I immediately said yes," she recalls in a chat with *The Pioneer*.

While the core themes of women's empowerment and societal expectations were evident, what resonated deeply with Sonam was the celebration of simple, traditional life. "Beyond the messaging, what really stood out to me was the beauty of a slow, close-knit village life, where community values still hold strong," she explains. "That's something we are losing in cities, and it's very nostalgic."

Filming *Duphainya* was an emotional experience, particularly because of its emphasis on relationships—especially the father-daughter bond. Sonam,

who shares a close relationship with her own father, found herself deeply connected to these moments. "My father was also very much like that—supportive, loving and always there. Those scenes felt very personal to me." The sense of community portrayed in the show also struck an emotional chord. "That feeling of belonging, of having people around you who care—that's missing so much in our modern lives," she reflects.

One of the most celebrated aspects of *Duphainya* is its strong female characters, who are both layered and relatable. Sonam credits the script for already having well-defined women, but she emphasizes that casting played a huge role in bringing them to life. "We had to ensure that the comedic element was maintained while also showing their strength and depth. That's why finding the right actors was so important. Shivan, who plays the lead, is just amazing. And our casting director did a brilliant job ensuring that every character felt real and authentic."

While *Duphainya* highlights women's empowerment, Sonam also wanted to ensure that male characters were well-developed and balanced. "This isn't just a female-centric story—it's about human relationships as a whole," she says.

The title *Duphainya*, which translates to "two-wheeler," carries multiple layers of meaning within the story. "It symbolises balance," Sonam explains. "One of the key themes of the show is the balance between tradition and modernity—the older generation holding onto traditions, while the younger generation pushes for change."

Beyond that, the title also reflects the tonal balance of the show. "For me, it was about maintaining comedy while also delivering emotional depth.

Having received widespread praise, *Duphainya* explores issues like dowry, colorism, and women's empowerment while celebrating the simplicity of small-town life. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, Sonam Nair opened up about her latest project *Duphainya*—a show that beautifully blends humor with hard-hitting social themes



That balance was crucial." As a female director in the industry, Sonam is often asked about the representation of women in filmmaking. While she acknowledges that having women tell female-led stories is important, she also believes in breaking stereotypes. "I love telling female-driven stories, but I also want to direct male-centric stories. We shouldn't limit ourselves—just like male directors should feel free to explore female narratives, female directors should be able to tell all kinds of stories."

With *Duphainya* following the success of projects like *Mrs.*, which also tackled social issues in a fresh way, Sonam believes Indian audiences are becoming more receptive to narratives that challenge norms. "Of course, entertainment is key—I love making entertaining content. But I personally get drawn to stories that do a little more than just entertain. I like narratives that offer something deeper while still being enjoyable."

While *Duphainya* is still making waves, Sonam is already thinking about her next project. "I actually got some ideas while editing the show. For me, the most fulfilling part of filmmaking is when the audience truly connects with the story. So my next project will be something that excites me and resonates with viewers in a meaningful way."



● Kajal



After gaining widespread recognition in the entertainment industry with his victory on *Bigg Boss 5*, actor Arun Abhimanyu, popularly known as VJ Sunny, is now venturing into the culinary world. He has inaugurated his new venture, Amrutham Adda, a South Indian kitchen, at Krishna Nagar in Hyderabad, with a grand and star-studded event. The launch was attended by several *Bigg Boss* celebrities and prominent personalities from the Telugu entertainment industry, including Priyanka Jain, Manas Nagulapalli, RJ Kajal, Priyanka Singh, Priya, Lobo and many others.



● Preethi



● Manas



● VJ Sunny



● Rinika



● Jaya



● Nayana



● Anusha



Repose Mattress, a leading player in the mid-to-premium mattress industry, has announced a strategic partnership with UK & Co., a renowned family business consulting firm, to propel its business to new heights. The partnership was officially announced by Ramanath Bhat, Joint Managing Director of Repose Mattress, Balachandrar S, Managing Director of Repose Mattress and K. Ullas Kamath, Founder of UK & Co. This collaboration aims to enhance Repose Mattress's growth and strengthen its position in the industry.



Sphoorthy Engineering College, in collaboration with the SVS Legal Education Society, organized a Legal Awareness Programme aimed at educating students and faculty on important legal topics such as Anti-Ragging Regulations, Cyber Laws, Employee Rights, and Women Protection Laws. The event was attended by distinguished guests, including B. Narasimha Sharma, Additional Solicitor General of India and Gadi Praveen Kumar, Deputy Solicitor General of India. Also present were Secretary & Correspondent S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, Principal Dr. V. S. Giridhar Akkula and IQAC Head Dr. Gayathri Pavani.



● Praveena kadiyala



The North American Telugu Association (NATS) is gearing up for its 8th Telugu Celebration event, which will take place in Tampa, US, from July 4 to 6. To kick off the festivities, a curtainraiser event was held in Hyderabad. Conference Convener Srinivas Guthikonda and NATS Chairman Prashant Pinnamanenu hosted a media conference, broadcasting live from the US. The event was attended by several prominent personalities, including actress Jayasudha, actress Amani, directors Harish Shankar and Meher Ramesh, music director Thaman, and renowned songwriters Ramajogayya Shastri and Chandra Bose, among others, who attended as chief guests.



● Ariyana



● Prasanth



● Sravanthi



● Srinivas



● Sana

PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary



HYDRONEXT 2025, a transformative World Water Day celebration hosted by The Modern Living (TML), the latest venture of Ion Exchange (India) Ltd, redefined the significance of water with a focus on innovation, wellness, and sustainability. The event, held at The Park in Somajiguda, brought together industry leaders, scientists, and experts to discuss the vital role water plays in shaping a sustainable future.



SATS Chairman Shiv Sena Reddy inaugurated India's first Lacrosse academy, the Garuda Lacrosse Academy, located on RCI Road in Badangpet, Hyderabad. Lacrosse is not just a sport; it's a legacy with deep roots in Native American traditions. Often referred to as "the fastest game on two feet," lacrosse combines elements of basketball, soccer, and hockey. It is a dynamic sport that requires agility, teamwork and lightning-fast reflexes from its players.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



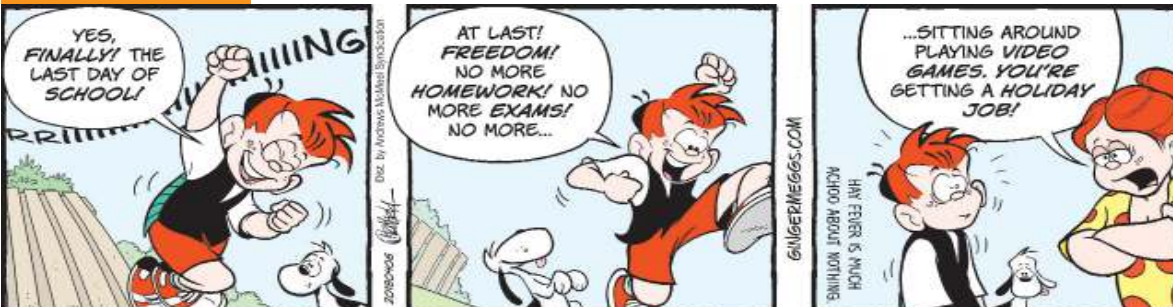
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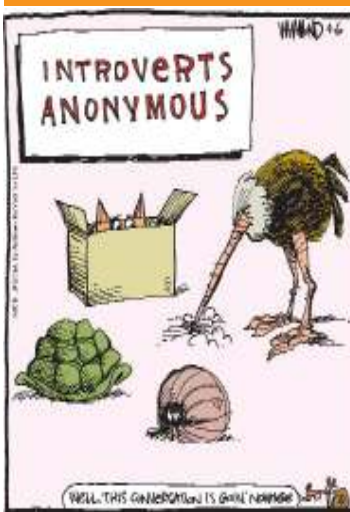
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



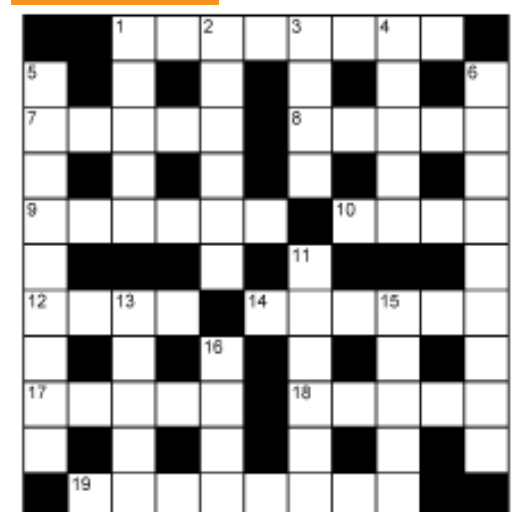
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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3	2	7	4	8	9	6	1	5
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Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

ACROSS

- In a battle
- A baking ingredient
- A clothing size
- One or the other
- A heavy metal
- A small sharp carpet nail
- Lump of gold
- A smell
- A body organ
- A minder of sheep

DOWN

- White frozen dew
- Grow vegetables here
- Have a conversation
- A health professional
- A feeling of fondness or liking
- An inscribed flat stone beside a grave
- Speak unclearly
- Fabric
- Protect from danger
- Hold tightly



FROM MAD TO MAD SQUARE: THE GANG RETURNS WITH MORE FUN!

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
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The college backdrop film *Mad*, released in October 2023, became a huge hit. Now, its sequel, *Mad Square*, will hit the screens this Friday, March 28. "The first one was set in a college backdrop, and now, in *Mad Square*, we've moved beyond college and attended Laddu's wedding. That's where the entertainment begins, and it's unstoppable," said the *Mad* gang, consisting of Narne Nithin, Sangeeth Sobhan and Ram Nithin. "When we complete *Mad* film, we all got emotional because we had become such good friends. It was like how emotions run high when a four-year college journey ends. Similarly, when the shooting of *Mad* finished, we felt the same emotions. But after 15 days of its release, we got the news of the

sequel and we were really happy," said the gang.

They added that when they started *Mad*, their confidence levels were low. "We were all new, without any established name, and we wondered if audiences would actually come to theaters to watch us. But after the film became a huge hit, we worked on this sequel with a much higher confidence level," said Ram Nithin. "We focused on delivering more entertainment in this sequel, and though we didn't do any special homework, we worked hard to keep the fun flowing," said Sangeeth Sobhan.

They emphasized that they aren't feeling pressure to deliver another hit. "We are still upcoming actors, and we did this project out of friendship and without pressure. The entertainment quotient is higher in this sequel, and we hope everyone enjoys it," said the gang. While Narne Nithin and Sangeeth Sobhan have some film background, Ram Nithin is completely new to the

industry. When asked if the three of them would act together in films produced by other production houses, Ram Nithin said, "This film is special to us and we believe it works best in this context." Sangeeth Sobhan added, "I haven't really thought about that idea."

Regarding the film's hero, they said, "In this film, the true hero is the story and the entertainment. If you ask who the hero of the film is, it's definitely the fun and the narrative." They also mentioned that in the first film, Narne Nithin's role as Ashok was serious and Ram Nithin's character, Manoj, was romantic, but in the sequel, both of them shift to comedy.

"This sequel is made purely for entertainment. For films like *Baahubali* or *RRR*, one expects a deep story, but *Mad Square* is a complete laugh riot where you don't expect a big storyline," said Narne Nithin. He also mentioned that their love interests, which carried

over from the first film, will continue in the sequel but won't appear on screen.

As for their remuneration, "Yes, as we joked in the trailer, it's Rs 116 each," they said with a laugh. They also added, "If the franchise continues, it would be great, but not immediately. If another sequel happens in the future, it could be a good thing."

On a personal note, Narne Nithin, who is the brother-in-law of top actor NTR, shared that NTR has always been supportive and gives valuable advice. "From the beginning of my career, he has been guiding me and I plan to continue taking his advice in the future," Narne Nithin said.



'Language is a window into different cultures'

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Shashaa Tirupati, an Indian-born Canadian playback singer, songwriter and music producer, has captivated audiences with her soulful voice across multiple Indian languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam. She gained widespread recognition with *Vaan* from *Kaatru Veliyidai*, a song that won her the National Film Award for Best Female Playback Singer. Over the years, she has worked with celebrated composers such as A.R. Rahman and Pritam, solidifying her place in the industry.

She was part of the KOLABHER MUSIC CAMP 2025 by Indian Performing Right Society (IPRS) & Sony Music Publishing to empower female music creators.

In a candid conversation with *The Pioneer*, Shashaa spoke about her multilingual experiences, her long-standing association with A.R. Rahman and how she balances the commercial side of music with her artistic expression.

Having sung in over 20 languages, Shashaa believes that this diverse exposure has significantly shaped her musical style and artistic approach. She sees language as more than just a medium of expression—it is a window into different cultures.

"It opens you up to new sounds, styles and emotions. Everything you listen to, everything you consume, stays in your subconscious memory. When you're creating your own music, those influences come through in subtle ways. Having this level of exposure has helped me bring more diversity into my music."

Her rendition of *Vaan* was a career-defining moment, not just because of the acclaim it received but because of the deep emotional connection she felt while recording it.

"I got very emotional while recording *Vaan*—even thinking about it now makes me emotional. It's the kind of song that happens once in a lifetime. After that song, I even thought of naming my daughter *Vaan* whenever I have kids. It was that special to me."

Reflecting on the song's success, she added, "In retrospect, I'm not surprised that the song received so much recognition. Both Rahman sir and I won National Awards for *Kaatru Veliyidai* and looking back, it feels like the song truly deserved it."

She has worked closely with A.R. Rahman on multiple projects and she considers her association with him a significant learning experience. "One of the most valuable lessons I've learned from him is to



In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, National Award-winning singer Shashaa Tirupati opens up about her journey across multiple languages, her deep-rooted connection with music, and her collaborations with industry stalwarts like A.R. Rahman

keep moving forward. He is in his 50s, probably my dad's age, but the music he creates still sounds fresh, like it's coming from a 20-year-old. He constantly upgrades himself, evolves and does things that many of his contemporaries do not. That has been a big lesson for me," she said.

As a playback singer, Shashaa delivers songs based on a director's vision, but her independent projects allow her to showcase a more personal, unfiltered side of her artistry.

"Bollywood is for my commercial side and independent music is where I pour out all my emotions. I'm an introvert, so I feel a lot but don't always talk about it. My music becomes an outlet for everything I

deal with—be it depression, anxiety, or heartbreaks. That's the crux of my independent work."

She also revealed that her ability to switch between these two worlds is aided by her ADHD.

"It actually helps me transition quickly. I can shift from playback singing to composing an independent song without feeling overwhelmed," she shared.

She participated in Collab Music Camp 2025, a space where artists from diverse backgrounds come together to create music. She was amazed by the energy and talent at the camp.

"I did not expect this level of sound production or the way everyone bonded so well. It was unreal,"

she said. "That's the beauty of art—it brings people together. Collaboration is king, and when artists vibe with each other, it reflects in the music."

She believes that creativity thrives in environments where artists feed off each other's energy.

"You can walk into a room and instantly feel if the creative energy is right. The enthusiasm at Collab was infectious, and that really helped in the creative process," she added.

With AI becoming an integral part of various creative fields, Shashaa sees both its advantages and its potential risks.

"AI can be a huge asset when it comes to songwriting, melody structuring, or production. You can use it to generate lyrics as a framework, which can then be refined by a lyricist. But AI should not become a crutch. If used wisely, it can be an incredible tool, but if misused, it could put musicians out of business."

Being in the music industry comes with its share of pressures and expectations. Shashaa acknowledges this but believes in making the most of every opportunity.

"There are moments when I've missed out on opportunities simply because I was in another city for a show when a last-minute studio call came. But you just do the best you can with what comes your way."

Among her many projects, Shashaa recalls *Rasaali* from *Achchan Yenbadhu Madamaiyada* as a particularly special song.

"Rahman sir told me he wanted to see the real Shashaa in that song. It felt like a big responsibility but also like he saw something in me that I hadn't yet recognised in myself," she reflected.

For those looking to pursue both playback singing and independent music, her advice is simple: master your craft.

"Hone your art. Keep getting better at what you do. Being a better singer isn't enough—become a better listener, learn production, try to create, and write. All of these skills will only help you grow as an artist," she said.

Shashaa has an exciting lineup of projects in the pipeline.

"I've just finished recording eight to nine Tamil and Telugu film songs, which will be releasing soon. I'm also working on two independent projects—one is a multi-visual EP with Iranian multi-instrumentalist Mehdad Ramzayi and the other is a classical fusion EP with a very contemporary sound," she revealed.

Rajendra Prasad under fire for insensitive comments on Warner

For celebrities, especially Telugu actors, they have huge fan followings. When attending public functions, these celebrities should aim to inspire others, particularly their followers. However, some have crossed boundaries in their remarks. Not long ago, at a film function where popular cricketer David Warner was present as the chief guest, senior actor Rajendra Prasad went off-script and made some loose comments.

This is not the first time Rajendra Prasad has made headlines for controversial remarks. This time, however, he crossed a line by using unparliamentary language when speaking about David Warner. Knowing that Warner doesn't understand Telugu, Rajendra Prasad took advantage of the language barrier, saying, "David Warner is not playing cricket; he's just doing reels," while mimicking the *Pushpa* walk. Then he continued to speak in a mocking tone, "Donga mun... koduku... orei Warneroo... me warning."

What Rajendra Prasad thought might be a joke or an entertaining moment, appeared to many as disrespectful. David Warner, who didn't understand the Telugu language, was left laughing at the situation, unaware of the comments



made about him. Unfortunately, Rajendra Prasad's words seemed to lower the respect of Telugu people in front of the cricket world.

The actor's remarks have since sparked outrage online, with netizens trolling Rajendra Prasad for his comments, claiming that his behavior tarnished the reputation of the Telugu community.

In a similar incident, actor Sivaji made controversial remarks at the success meet of his recent film. While discussing his role's success, he used harsh language, saying, "nee ya... nee tha... deenem..." It makes one wonder where things are heading, as more and more celebrities seem to lose control when addressing a live audience, especially with thousands watching online and hundreds attending the events in person.

Prabhas' role in *Kannappa* will surpass expectations



Vishnu Manchu has once again opened up about his dream project. Directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh, the film is scheduled for release on April 25. Some members of the team participated in the Red Lorry Film Festival. Vishnu Manchu, during the event, shared, "I am usually a devotee of Lord Anjaneya, but after starting the journey with *Kannappa*, I became a devotee of Lord Shiva." He added that *Kannappa* will impress everyone. "Keep your expectations high; Prabhas' role will exceed them. I have learned a lot from the journey of *Kannappa*," said the actor.

Raghubabu, who plays a key role in the film, remarked that if anyone trolled this film, they would face punishment from Lord Shiva. "Don't troll this film; if you troll, you will be cursed," warned Raghubabu. He also said, "It's a blessing to get the opportunity to act in a film like *Kannappa*. Vishnu will reach another level with this film."

Director Mukesh Kumar Singh revealed that Vishnu had first gotten the idea for the story back in 2015. "In January 2016, I went to Sri Kalahasti and had a darshan of Lord Shiva. It was Shiva who sent me to this project. That's the divine play of Shiva," said the director.

Suhas confident about *O Bhama Ayyo Rama* after skepticism

Actor Suhas is now focusing on lead roles and is coming up with a new film titled *O Bhama Ayyo Rama*. The teaser for the film was released on Monday at an event in Hyderabad. During the event, the actor described the film as a romantic love story. "Initially, I had doubts about doing this film when director Ram Godhala approached me. I had done many films but never a romantic love story, so I expressed my concerns

to the director. However, he was full of confidence in me and narrated the story and I liked a few points, especially in the second half," Suhas said about the film.

The actor also mentioned that while his last few films received good appreciation, they didn't perform well commercially. "Some of the films received good appreciation, but the execution may not have been up to the



mark. I will take care of that in my upcoming films. Additionally, some of my older films released in between, which didn't perform well," Suhas added. He is now confident about *O Bhama Ayyo Rama*.

When asked if he has been losing some roles due to not doing character roles, Suhas responded, "I want to play lead

roles and if I get good villain roles, I am ready to do those as well." The actor is also making his Tamil debut soon. Another film, *Uppu Kappurambu*, where he stars alongside Keerthy Suresh as the lead, is also in the pipeline. "It will be released in both Tamil and Telugu," he said.

Malayalam actress Malavika Manoj, known for her role in *Joe*, plays the female lead in this Telugu film. Directed by Ram Godhala and pro-

duced by Harish Nalla under the V Arts banner, the film will be distributed by Rana Daggubati's Spirit Media. The highly anticipated teaser was unveiled on Monday, promising a fun-filled summer release.

Director Ram Godhala expressed his gratitude, saying, "Every filmmaker dreams of seeing their name on the big screen. This dream of mine has come true, thanks to Suhas and producer Harish."

